

# Low Temperatures are a Pet Hazard

Temperatures along the Wasatch Front are plunging into the teens, and the Humane Society of Utah again reminds the community that this can greatly affect pets.

Animal coats do not provide adequate protection against the bitter cold that will be hitting the area, and the society urges people to use both common sense and compassion when it comes to the animals in their care.

“Warm-blooded mammals can’t survive without adequate protection in the kind of cold weather we’re going to be having,” said HSU Executive Director Gene Baierschmidt. “If you can’t actually keep your animals in the house with the rest of the family, or in a basement or garage, then please see that they have snug, insulated shelter away from the wind and elevated off the ground. In case of livestock, these animals need proper shelter, too. Bring horses into the barn. It’s the only reasonable thing to do.”

In addition, the Humane Society reminds people to take the following precautions with their pets:

- Keep cats inside. Outdoors, cats can freeze, become lost, injured or killed. Cats who are allowed to stray are exposed to fatal diseases, including rabies. They also prey upon songbirds and other wildlife.
- During the winter, outdoor cats some times crawl under the hoods of cars in an effort to keep warm. When the motor is started, the cat can be injured or killed by the fan belt. If there is any chance that a cat may have sought shelter under a car’s hood, always bang on the hood before starting the engine to give the animal a chance to escape.
- Pets that are very young, very old, ill or short-haired should not be kept outdoors at all.
- Animals need extra calories and protein during the winter because they consume more energy just maintaining normal body temperature. Water bowls must be emptied and re-filled frequently to keep ice from forming.
- If you own a short-haired breed of dog and want it to have outdoor exercise, get it a coat or sweater with a high collar or turtleneck that covers it from the base of the tail on top to the belly underneath.
- Antifreeze is extremely attractive to pets, and also extremely toxic. All spills should be immediately and thoroughly wiped up.
- Just as a pet should never be left in the car in the summertime, never leave a dog or cat alone in the car in low temperatures.

For more information on cold-weather pet care, call the Humane Society at 261-2919.